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ABSTRACT

A study compared employed mothers with working women who do not have children along dimensions reflective of their life histories and labor market experiences. It utilized data from two nationwide longitudinal surveys--the National Longitudinal Survey of Young Women aged 14 to 24 and the National Longitudinal Study of the High School Class of 1972. Cross-tabulations between selected, theoretically relevant variables were performed, and various measures of association were obtained. This series of analyses focused on differences in socioeconomic background, educational attainment and goals, occupational status and aspirations, and personal attitudes of employed mothers and employed women without children. A regression analysis was undertaken to determine which variables would be predictors of the dichotomous variable indicating whether a woman is a mother, when their overlapping effects are controlled. Statistical analyses did not contradict the suggestions of theorists in vocational development that employed mothers have many obstacles to surmount as their careers develop. They were more likely to come from lower socioeconomic levels, have completed fewer years of education, and to be available to work only part-time. (Twenty-three tables are appended.) (YLB)

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THE IMPACT OF MOTHERHOOD ON THE CAREER PATTERN OF WORKING WOMEN: Differences in the Life Histories and Career Status of Employed Mothers and Working Women Without Children

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INTRODUCTION: The 1950's and early 1960's were characterized by a lack of day care facilities and a pervasive attitude in society that women should limit themselves to being full-time homemakers. In the 1950's, it was unusual for mothers to work outside the home. Today it is not at all unusual. According to the U. S. Department of Labor Statistics in 1976, almost half of all mothers of school-age children and forty-six percent of all mothers with children under six years were in the labor force. The department estimates there were six and a half million children under six years of age who had employed mothers. The participation of mothers in the labor force varied considerably according to their educational status, marital status, occupational status, perception of themselves, socio-economic status and attitudes of significant others.

Of the many factors that have been hypothesized to influence the career development and labor market participation of women, the dimension of motherhood has received little attention. Because of her child-rearing responsibilities, the employed mother has a career which is frequently less stable and less predictable than that of the employed woman who does not have children. For some employed mothers, participation in the world of work is dictated by economic pressures and limited by time constraints, thus forcing them into occupations which are neither satisfying nor fulfilling. As a result, employed mothers represent a segment of our labor force which faces unique problems and whose potential may not be presently realized.

It is the purpose of this study to compare employed mothers with working women who do not have children along dimensions reflective of their life histories and labor market experiences.

POPULATION: The present study utilized data from two nationwide longitudinal surveys, namely, the National Longitudinal Survey of Young Women aged 14 to 24, collected by the Ohio State University and the Bureau of the Census between 1968

and 1975 (known as the Parnes Study), and the National Longitudinal Study of the High School Class of 1972, collected by the National Center for Education Statistics between 1972 and 1976 (referred to as NLS-72).

The Parnes data represented women from a diverse population which varied according to age and education. From this data base, information on 3,930 women (1,952 of whom were mothers) working in the labor force in 1975 was utilized. The NLS-72 data represented a more homogeneous population age-wise, all of whom were seniors in the high school class of 1972. For the present study, NLS-72 records for 7,013 women (of whom 1,304 were mothers) working in 1976 were also examined.

METHODOLOGY: The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) and the Statistical Analysis System (SAS) were used to create working data files. Cross-tabulations between selected, theoretically relevant variables were performed and various measures of association were obtained. This series of analyses focused on differences in the socioeconomic background, educational attainment and goals, occupational status and aspirations, and personal attitudes of employed mothers and employed women without children.

A regression analysis was also undertaken to determine which variables would be significant predictors of the dichotomous variable, CHILD (indicating whether or not a woman is a mother), when their overlapping effects are controlled. For the purposes of this particular analysis only data from NLS-72 were used and only those women who were married and working in 1976 were studied. This yielded a sample of 2,313 women, of which about 31 percent or 717 had at least one child.

The variables included in the analysis, as well as their coding scheme, are as follows:

CHILD - 0 if woman had no children;
1 if woman had one or more children.

Family SES - Based on a standardized, equally weighted linear composite of father's education, mother's education, father's occupation, family income, and household items, this was coded 1 for high, 2 for medium, 3 for low.

Mother's Labor Force Status Before Elementary School

0 if mother did not work;
1 if mother worked part-time;
2 if mother worked full-time.

High School Program - 3 dummy variables:

Academic curriculum: 1 if academic, 0 otherwise;
General curriculum: 1 if general, 0 otherwise;
Non-business Vocational curriculum: 1 if vocational, 0 otherwise;
Other category includes business vocational.

Educational Attainment as of 1976

1 if the respondent completed only high school;
2 if she finished junior college or a vocational school or less than 2 years of college;
3 if more than 2 years of college were completed;
4 if she obtained B. A. or any education beyond college.

Extent of Labor Force Participation as of 1976

0 if employed part-time;
1 if employed full-time.

Type of Occupation - 6 dummy variables:

Professional occupation: 1 if professional, 0 otherwise;
Managerial occupation: 1 if managerial, 0 otherwise;
Sales occupation: 1 if sales, 0 otherwise;
Clerical occupation: 1 if clerical, 0 otherwise;
Craftsperson occupation: 1 if craftsperson, 0 otherwise;
Operative occupation: 1 if operative, 0 otherwise;
Other occupations.

Job Satisfaction as of 1976

1 if very satisfied;
2 if satisfied;
3 if dissatisfied;
4 if very dissatisfied.

Attitude About Mother of Preschooler Being Just As Good a Mother - 1976

1 if Agree strongly;
2 if Agree;
3 if Disagree;
4 if Disagree strongly.

FINDINGS: Results from the analyses of the Parnes data indicated that:

SES--No differences between employed mothers and employed women without children were found.

OCCUPATION OF MOTHER OF WORKING WOMAN--Employed mothers were less likely to have had mothers who were employed in professional or managerial occupations than were employed women without children.

LEVEL OF EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT--Employed women who had completed higher levels of education were less likely to be mothers than employed women who had completed high school or less.

HIGH SCHOOL CURRICULUM--Employed women coming from vocational or general curricula were more likely to be mothers than employed women having had completed an academic curriculum.

EDUCATIONAL GOALS--Employed mothers had lower educational goals than did employed nonmothers.

OCCUPATION DESIRED AT AGE 35--Employed mothers were more likely to aspire to professional occupations than were employed nonmothers.

TYPE OF TRAINING DESIRED--Employed mothers more often desired training in professional fields than did employed nonmothers.

MARITAL STATUS--Employed mothers were more likely tobe married or to have been married than were employed nonmothers.

EXTENT OF LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION--Employed mothers were more likely to be working part-time than working women without children.

OCCUPATIONAL STATUS--Employed mothers were less likely to be in professional or managerial occupations than were employed nonmothers.

ATTITUDE TOWARD PRESENT OCCUPATION--Employed mothers were less likely to express 'very much' satisfaction with their present occupation than were employed nonmothers.

Results from the bivariate analyses of the NLS-72 data indicated that:

SES--Employed women who were classified as being low SES were more likely to be mothers than working women classified as medium or high SES. (See Table 1).

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT OF PARENTS OF EMPLOYED WOMEN--Employed women whose mothers or fathers had at least completed a high school education were less likely to be mothers than employed women whose parents had less than a high school degree. (See Tables 2a and 2b).

EXTENT OF LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION OF MOTHER--Employed women whose mothers had worked full-time either before or during their elementary school years were more likely to be mothers than employed women whose mothers did not work. (See Tables 3a and 3b).

HIGH SCHOOL CURRICULUM--Employed women who were in general, vocational, or business curricula were more likely to be mothers than employed women who had followed an academic curriculum. (See Table 4).

LEVEL OF EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT--The higher the educational attainment as of 1976, the less likely the woman would be a mother. (See Table 5).

EDUCATION EXPECTED--The higher the level of education expected as of 1972, the less likely the woman would be a mother. (See Table 6).

MARITAL STATUS--Employed women who are or have ever been married were more likely to be mothers than employed women who were single. (See Table 8).

CURRENT OCCUPATION--Employed women who were engaged in professional occupations were less likely to be mothers than were employed women engaged in other occupations. (See table 9).

LABOR FORCE STATUS BY SES--Full-time employed women who were classified as being low SES and part-time employed women who were classified as low or medium SES were more likely to be mothers. (See Tables 10a and 10b).

SATISFACTION WITH EMPLOYMENT--Married nonmothers were most likely to be satisfied while nonmarried mothers were least likely to be satisfied. (See Table 12).

ATTITUDE ABOUT PROVIDING OPPORTUNITY FOR CHILDREN--When asked in 1972, mothers employed in 1976 were more likely to have felt that it was very important to provide children with a better opportunity in life than were women who would not be mothers in 1976. (See Table 13).

ATTITUDE ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING SUCCESSFUL--Employed mothers were more likely to feel that being successful in the working world was not important than did working women who were not mothers in 1976. (See Table 14).

ATTITUDE TOWARD WORKING MOTHER OF PRESCHOOLER--Employed mothers were more likely to agree with the statement that a working mother of a pre-school child can be just as good a mother as one who does not work, than were women who were not mothers in 1976. (See Table 15).

The regression results, which apply only to married working women, bore out many of the findings suggested by the previous analyses. (See Table C). The best predictor of whether or not a working married woman has a child is her attitude about whether or not a working mother of a pre-schooler can be just as good a mother as one who does not work. Working women who feel this way are more likely to be mothers. Other highly significant predictors were SES and educational attainment. The lower the SES and the less education attained, the more likely

the woman is a mother. The variable, extent of labor force participation, was also found to be an effective predictor with employed mothers more often being represented by the part-time employed woman.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS: Our statistical analyses do not contradict the suggestions of theorists in vocational development that the employed mother has many obstacles to surmount as her career develops. That she is more likely to come from lower levels of the socioeconomic ladder and to have completed fewer years of education, coupled with her availability to work only part-time, in some sense accounts for her having to fill lower status jobs. It would seem that such circumstances do not foster upward mobility and, indeed, perhaps perpetuate the past socioeconomic conditions of these women. However, in spite of these influences, our analyses suggest that personal attitudes about child-rearing differentiate significantly between employed mothers and working women who do not have children.

These results suggest that the employed mother or future employed mother needs not only vocational guidance, but also realistic career information. Emphasis should be placed on life planning rather than career planning in isolation of one's choice of life style. Helping women develop knowledge, skills, and strategies that are negotiable for greater personal and career satisfaction should be of high priority.

Table 1.--SES Composite Classification for Working Women

	% Mothers	Sample size
Low	33.7	2021
Medium	16.5	3426
High	8.0	1565
TOTAL	18.8	7012

Table 2a.--Education Completed by Mothers of Working Women as of 1972

	% Mothers	Sample size
Less than High School	29.5	2224
High School	17.0	2801
Some College	12.1	1280
4-Year College	7.2	449
M.A. - Ph.D.	8.9	234
TOTAL	18.8	6988

Table 2b.--Education Completed by Fathers of Working Women as of 1972

	% Mothers	Sample size
Less than High School	29.0	2502
High School	17.5	2071
Some College	12.7	1240
4-Year College	8.6	633
M.A. - Ph.D.	7.2	520
TOTAL	18.7	6966

Table 3a.--Participation in Labor Force of Working Women Before Daughters Entered Elementary School

	% Mothers	Sample size
No	15.4	3341
Part Time	17.7	1113
Full Time	23.4	1904
Does Not Apply	24.3	171
TOTAL	18.2	6529

Table 3b.--Participation in Labor Force of Mothers of Working Women While Daughters Were in Elementary School

	% Mothers	Sample si
No	15.6	4194
Part Time	19.9	670
Full Time	26.4	1394
Does Not Apply	24.5	225
TOTAL	18.4	6483

Table 4.--High School Curriculums of Working Women (1972)

	% Mothers	Sample size
General	24.7	2116
Academic	8.8	2595
Vocational	35.0	481
Business	22.5	1324
TOTAL	18.5	6516

Table 5.--Educational Attainment of Working Women as of October 1976

	% Mothers	Sample size
High School	32.8	2492
Vocational	21.3	1144
Less than 2-years	16.8	976
Greater than 2-years	4.8	1139
College grad.	1.9	1260
TOTAL	18.6	7013

Table 6.--Highest Educational Attainment Expected by Working Women (1972)

	% Mothers	Sample size
Less than High School	31.6	81
High School Only	29.0	724
Voc.-Tech.	23.0	817
Junior College	13.4	566
4-Year College or University	8.0	1516
Grad. School	6.3	373
TOTAL	15.9	4077

Table 7a.--Work Predicted at Age 30 by Working Women (1972)

	% Mothers	Sample size
Clerical	23.1	1323
Craftsmen	11.4	40
Homemaker	26.5	1358
Manager	14.3	266
Operative	38.9	63
Professional	8.8	2579
Sales	39.6	94
Other	30.0	568
Not Working	22.1	122
TOTAL	18.5	6413

Table 7b.--Work predicted at Age 30 by Working Women (1976)

	% Mothers	Sample size
Clerical	26.0	1347
Craftsmen	28.2	57
Homemaker	22.0	1388
Manager	15.0	631
Operative	36.7	134
Professional	10.3	2445
Sales	23.0	120
Other	25.7	589
Not Working	20.6	135
TOTAL	18.6	6846

Table 8.--Marital Status of Working Women - 1976

	% Mothers	Sample size
Single w/plans	6.6	709
Single no plans	4.8	2738
Divorced, widowed, separated	36.8	446
Married	32.7	2950
TOTAL	19.1	6843

Table 9.--Current Occupational Classification of Working Women as of October 1976

	% Mothers	Sample size
Professional	6.5	1274
Managerial	14.5	280
Sales	18.4	402
Clerical	16.6	3083
Craftsmen	14.2	96
Operative	35.1	473
Other	23.2	1080
TOTAL	16.9	6688

Table 10a.--Full Time Employed Working Women as of 1976 Cross-tabulated by SES

	% Mothers	Sample size
Low	29.4	1568
Medium	12.9	2642
High	7.4	1080
TOTAL	16.0	5290

Table 10b.--Part Time Employed Working Women as of 1976 Cross-tabulated by SES

	% Mothers	Sample size
Low	40.0	295
Medium	43.4	653
High	8.1	448
TOTAL	21.0	1396

Table 11a.--Satisfaction of Working Mothers with Work Broken Down by Full and Part Time Employment

	% Satisfied	Sample size
Full Time	78.5	952
Part Time	83.6	283
TOTAL	79.9	1235

Table 11b.-Satisfaction of Working Non-Mothers with Work Broken Down By Full and Part Time Employment

	% Satisfied	Sample size
Full Time	80.5	4372
Part Time	74.6	1119
TOTAL	79.3	5491

Table 12.--Satisfaction of Working Women Broken Down by Marital and Motherhood Status.

	% Satisfied	Sample size
Married non-mothers	80.7	1966
Nonmarried non-mothers	75.8	3676
Married mothers	70.6	984
Nonmarried mothers	64.6	434
TOTAL	75.8	7060

Table 13.--Importance to Give Children Better Opportunity in Life (1972)

	% Mothers	Sample Size
Very Important	21.4	3584
Somewhat Important	9.8	1359
Not Important	8.9	286
TOTAL	17.4	5229

Table 14.--Importance of Being Successful in Working World (1976)

	% Mothers	Sample size
Very Important	17.3	4859
Somewhat Important	21.4	1839
Not Important	27.4	183
TOTAL	18.7	6881

Table 15.--Feel that Working Mother of Pre-school Children Can Be Ju as Good a Mother as the non-working Mother

	%Married Working Mothers	Sample siz
Agree strongly	47.0	688
Agree	32.0	1110
Disagree	18.0	678
Disagree strongly	15.0	175
TOTAL	31.0	2651

TABLE A

MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS OF VARIABLES USED IN REGRESSION

	Mean	S.D.
Motherhood status	0.3078	0.4617
Family SES	1.8889	0.6955
Mother work before elementary school	0.5590	0.8366
Academic curriculum	0.3018	0.4591
General curriculum	0.3281	0.4696
Vocational curriculum	0.0709	0.2567
Educational Attainment - 76	2.0584	1.1611
Work status - 76	0.8171	0.3867
Professional occupation - 76	0.1535	0.3605
Managerial occupation - 76	0.0402	0.1965
Sales occupation - 76	0.0605	0.2385
Clerical occupation - 76	0.4989	0.5001
Craftsman occupation - 76	0.0134	0.1150
Operative occupation - 76	0.0847	0.2786
Job satisfaction - 76	1.8807	0.7159
Mother of preschooler just as good	2.1159	0.8668

TABLE B

CORRELATION MATRIX OF VARIABLES USED IN REGRESSION

		A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P
A	Motherhood status																
B	Family SES	-.267															
C	Mother work before elementary school	.121	-.113														
D	Academic curriculum	-.155	.243	-.069													
E	General curriculum	.088	-.066	.037	-.459												
F	Vocational curriculum	.068	-.099	.047	-.182	-.193											
G	Educational Attainment - 76	-.258	.284	-.041	.344	-.061	-.084										
H	Work status - 76	-.128	-.048	.019	-.086	.026	.009	-.036									
I	Professional occupation - 76	-.154	.156	-.029	.227	-.055	-.052	.394	.015								
J	Managerial occupation - 76	-.017	.080	-.037	.028	-.012	-.005	.007	.011	-.087							
K	Sales occupation - 76	.011	.035	.008	.031	-.038	.015	-.003	-.152	-.108	-.052						
L	Clerical occupation - 76	-.070	-.002	-.014	-.072	-.082	-.060	-.138	.152	-.425	-.204	-.253					
M	Craftsman occupation - 76	-.004	-.008	-.037	-.019	.007	-.003	-.048	-.003	-.050	-.024	-.030	-.116				
N	Operative occupation - 76	.167	-.213	.034	-.126	.151	.067	-.177	.092	-.130	-.062	-.077	-.304	-.035			
O	Job satisfaction - 76	.020	-.047	.031	.036	.001	-.003	.023	-.046	-.073	-.067	.027	-.011	.019	.081		
P	Mother of preschooler just as good -76	-.234	.067	-.139	.035	-.020	-.035	-.011	-.026	-.020	.013	.056	-.013	-.007	-.032	.042	

TABLE C

REGRESSION EQUATIONS PREDICTING MOTHER STATUS
AS OF OCTOBER 1976 FOR MARRIED WOMEN FROM HIGH SCHOOL CLASS OF 1972

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES	SIMPLE CORRELATION	REGRESSION COEFFICIENTS UNSTANDARDIZED	REGRESSION COEFFICIENTS STANDARDIZED	F-RATIO	CUMULATIVE SQUARED MULTIPLE CORRELATION COEFFICIENT
Family SES	-.267	-.111	-.167	68.6***	.071
Mother work before elem. school	.122	.031	.056	8.7**	.079
Curriculum					.090
Academic	-.155	-.011	-.011	0.2	
General	.088	.040	.040	3.1	
Vocational (nonbusiness)	.068	.033	.018	0.8	
Educational Attainment 1976	-.258	-.070	-.177	65.7***	.120
Work status - 1976	-.128	-.168	-.140	51.8***	.142
Occupation					.157
Professional	-.154	-.132	-.103	15.3***	
Managerial	-.017	-.063	-.027	1.7	
Sales	.011	-.059	-.031	2.0	
Clerical	-.070	-.105	-.114	15.9***	
Craftsman	-.004	-.132	-.033	2.9	
Operative	.167	.070	.042	3.3	
Other (not included)					
Job satisfaction - 1976	.020	.003	.004	0.1	.158
Mother of preschooler just as good	-.234	-.115	-.216	130.7***	.203

R^2	.203
Sample size	2313
Constant	1.083

** - significant at .01 level
*** - significant at .001 level

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